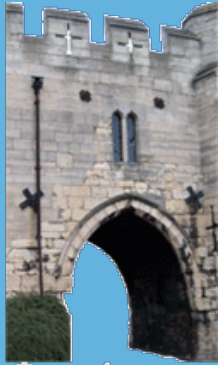


GATEHOUSE NEWS



Developments of the Gatehouse Website. The comprehensive bibliography and gazetteer of the castles, fortifications and palaces of medieval England and Wales.

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11 March 2017

User Statistic for 2016.

I was able to see what the problem was with my Goggle Analytics data and have done the mass (but mainly automated) rewrite of Gatehouse required to get the rough visitors number I use. Unfortunately, I don't think this will tell me how many people are looking at my essays that I converted into pdf form but I'm not 'numbers' driven so the figures are never a drive for me in regard to what I do with Gatehouse.

For the first 10 months of 2016 Gatehouse averaged about 32,000 page views and 12,400 users a month. 20% of users were returning users. 81% were identified as based in the UK, 9% the US, 2% Australian.

For me the important figures are engagement, rather than absolute numbers so I remain happy that my 'bounce' rate is about 80% - meaning, I hope, that the page design makes the type of content Gatehouse offers fairly clear and it doesn't waste the time of people who have been brought to Gatehouse by a search engine but are looking for something other than an academic bibliography.

Over the 10 month period for which the figures are reliable some 1860 users return returning to Gatehouse more than 10 times for some 75000

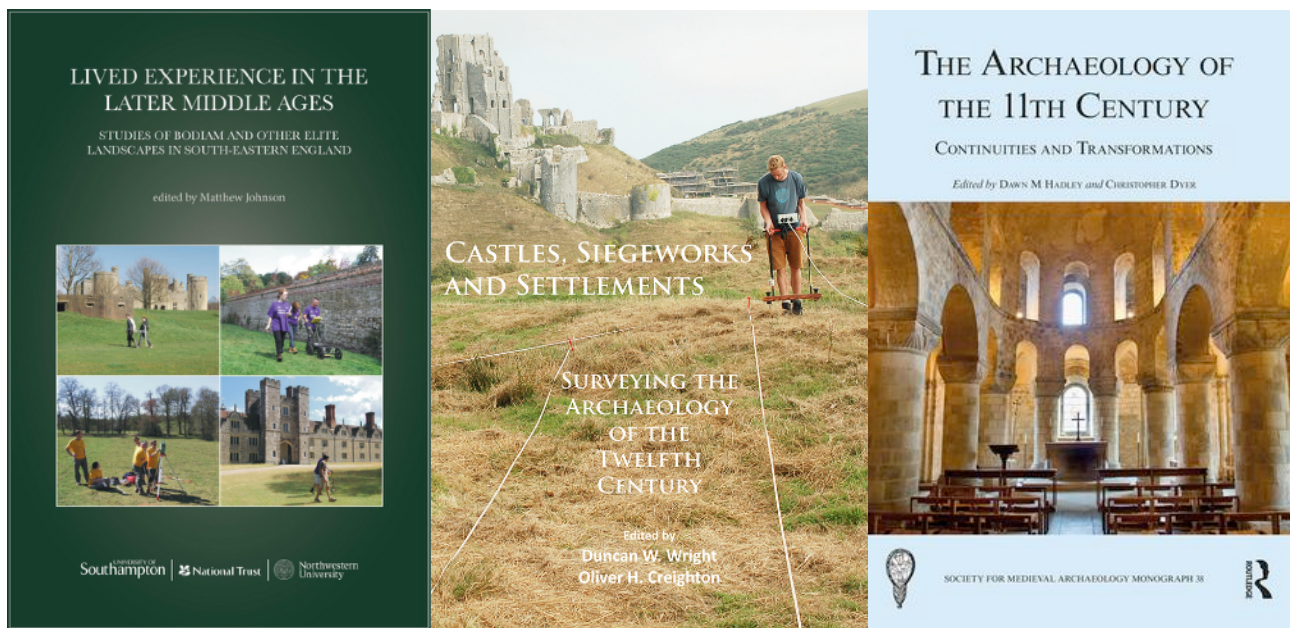
page views with some 1310 having over 200 visits (7964 page views). Put another way some 150,000 pages were viewed for more than 1 minute and nearly 65000 viewed for more than 20 minutes (although this will include pages left open on browsers). This compares very well with the 148000 pages viewed for less than a minute. Hopefully, this means people either see Gatehouse is not for them or they find something in the pages to keep them engaged for a good while. For reasons obscure to me the single site with the most visits was [Kenninghall Place](#), with some 553 visits in that 10 month period, although the low engagement suggests the reason is not one I need to be concerned about. Now that I've got my site analytics back to some sort of order I can see this seems to be about normal for current use and, while James Wrights recent comments on Twitter are very much appreciated I don't think he is the **only** intense user of Gatehouse out there.

Books

This winter does seem to have been a bumper time for castle studies related books.

A sort of supplement to Oliver Creighton and Duncan Wright's *The Anarchy War and Status in 12th-Century Landscapes of Conflict* (Liverpool University Press) mentioned in the last News is *Castles, Siegeworks and Settlements* ([Archaeopress](#)) edited by Creighton and Wright which has 12 archaeological investigations reports which have relevance to 17 sites recorded in Gatehouse. For many of these sites, the reports are of major importance being the best archaeological investigations of those sites available. Although available as a hard copy it is also available, at the moment, as a free download, for personal study.

When one looks at the extensive bibliography for [Bodiam Castle](#) one might naïvely think that there can be nothing more to write. The Gatehouse bibliography really only represents a fraction of what has been written about



Bodiam, although most of the stuff not included is populist and of little value to an academic understanding of the castle. This can certainly not be said about Matthew Johnson (ed.), 2017, *Lived experience in the later Middle Ages: studies of Bodiam and other elite landscapes in south-eastern England* (The Highfield Press). This is the result of an interdisciplinary, collaborative effort between Northwestern University, the University of Southampton and the National Trust of fieldwork which took place between 2010 and 2014. The book contains a number of important papers on Bodiam and on some other related sites such as [Knole House](#), [Ightham Court](#) and [Scotney Castle](#). The project is supported by a website [Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages](#) which does actually have quite a bit of content. Those who are not naïve about academic study will realise there is still much to understand about Bodiam. This book and the research it is based upon go some way to understand the interior of the castle (moving well away from Simpson's 1930s ideas on Bastard Feudalism) although further work is needed and even the landscape around the castle, the subject of much discussion, is still not really fully understood as the dating of some features is not fully appreciated and the variability of the medieval course of the River Rother not always known.

Back in 2013, the [Society for Medieval Archaeology](#) held the first of a revived series of annual conferences at the University of Nottingham and I was lucky enough to attend. Most of the papers from that conference have now been published, in a volume edited by Dawn Hadley and Christopher Dyer as *The Archaeology of the 11th Century Continuities and Transformations* (2017: [Routledge](#)). The papers contained have some relevance to over 50 of the sites in Gatehouse but particularly worthy of note are Michael Shapland's paper 'Anglo-Saxon towers of lordship and the origins of the castle in England' and Michael Fradley's paper 'Scars on the townscape: urban castles in Saxo-Norman England'. Whilst I do recommend this book please do note it is extraordinarily expensive and it may be worth waiting for a set of considered reviews by people more expert than me (I'm sure the [Castle Studies Group Bibliography and/or Journal](#) will review it) before committing to spending a three figure sum.

A somewhat older 'book' has recently become available online in the form of a typed list and translated transcriptions of primary source documents relating to [Clun Castle](#). This work by Henry Summerson from 1993 has been added to the always useful [Archaeological Date](#)



[Service website](#) (Hosted by The University of York) as part of [City of Hereford Archaeology Unit, Clun Castle Archive Project, 2016](#). I'm afraid I will not be extracting and individually listing all the 150+ source references given by Summerson however the link to his *opus* has been added as well as to the other, archaeological, reports added to ADS.

Other News

Roger Wilson continues in his much-appreciated campaign to make me realise that Gatehouse will never be a completed project by sending me another set of sites, this time in Yorkshire. While I'm not expecting to find a 'lost' major stone castle Roger's work in identifying sites is not only much appreciated but often has me thinking. The relationship between the surviving [Norton's Tower at Rylstone](#) (Noted by DJC King and long in Gatehouse) and the lost Clifford's Tower gives hints to a fascinating story of how architecture had a role in elite landowners disputes over hunting.

Another site I perhaps should have picked up years ago is Brandsby Manor. A rare surviving building contract for house with a drawbridge and defensible room (a gatehouse), in Norman French survives between Thomas Ughtred and

John del Wod of Ripon and this is transcribed and appears in a few texts (i.e. Salzman, L.F., 1967 (2edn), *Building in England down to 1540* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press) Appendix D. no. 1). This was made on 12 September 1341 at Brandsby and, it appears, authors have assumed it was a contract for work at Brandsby. However, as far as I can see, Brandsby was not a holding of Sir Thomas Ughtred (who's duties will have involved him travelling around Yorkshire) and the contract may actually relate to another house, possibly [Rede House](#) at Moor Monkton which appears to be a new build house and which was granted a licence to crenellate 25 February 1342.

New Sites

All from Roger.

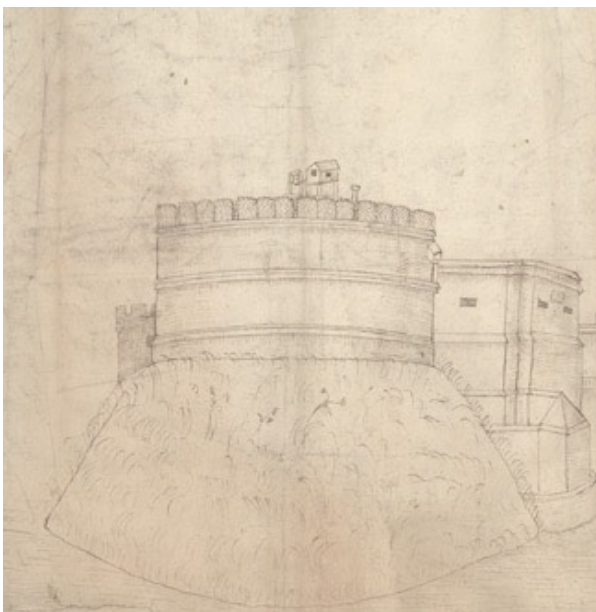
- [New Hall Tower \(Clifford's Tower\)](#) - I've added a possible pele tower
- [Barmston Old Hall](#) - is a possible fortified manor house.
- [Brandsby Manor](#) - questionable FMH.
- [Skipsea Hall Garth](#) - Questionable FMH. The conflict between the historical and archaeological evidence suggests something amiss. Big moat but the area is very subject to floods so moat probably entirely for drainage.
- [Cowling Hall](#) - Probably was a courtyard house but without a moat difficult to think this could be considered as a FMH. The evidence for a simple solar block type pele-tower seems better.
- [Hatterboard Tower](#) - I spent a good while trying to get the actual source for the reported C13 mention of a tower. The references given in the VCH don't help. It may be in Turton's *Honor of Pickering* but in vol 1 which is not online (the other three volumes are so that is just frustrating) or in the *Yorkshire Feet of Fines*. I'll have to take a trip to a University Library to look at these. Without the primary source I'm guessing a bit but, on analogue, my feel is this was a modest 'keepers' tower/house rather than a higher status hunting lodge.

Acknowledgement

The date of the Brandsby contract is given as 'le Mardy procheyn devant la fest del exaltacion de la Saynt Croice lan de notre Seign' MCCCXLI.' I use [A medieval English calendar](#) to work out what date that was in modern nomenclature. This is part of a considerable number of very useful resources provided by Chris Phillips as part of his fantastically useful [SOME NOTES ON MEDIEVAL ENGLISH GENEALOGY](#) website.

Forthcoming

I'm intending to add an essay about the term 'keep'. Some years ago Michael Thompson and John Kenyon wrote about the origin of the term (*Medieval Archaeology* **38** pp. 175-6) and I certainly don't have anything much new to add to the work of these outstanding scholars but I hope an illustrated online essay may help get out there the reasons this term is problematic. One thing I do intend to add is



Detail from 'A View of the Keep and Part of the Walls of the Castle of Guines, France' ([British Library online gallery](#))

The 'kipe' or 'coop' at Guines. The origin of the term being a nickname for the tower based on its resemblance to a barrel (a coop as in a cooper being a maker of barrels) and nothing to do with a supposed function as a redoubt of last resort.



Hikone Castle, Shiga Prefecture.
One of only twelve castles in Japan with an original *tenshu*.

(Image, by 663higland, from [wikipedia commons](#))

something on the various names such great towers are known by elsewhere. The Spanish *Torre del Homenaje* is certainly a term more evocative of the use of these towers as suggested by modern writers like Philip Dixon and Pamela Marshall. I'm certainly no expert on Japanese castles which may have been used in a different way in a rather different society but the Japanese term used for the great tower appears to be *Tenshu* literally 'Protector of Heaven' although earlier forms had meanings 'Master of Heaven', 'Master of the Palace' and 'Protector of the Palace' ([wikipedia](#)) although I'm sure I don't understand the nuances of the Japanese use of 'Heaven' or 'Protector'. Any suggestions, comments or advice for such an essay are most welcome.

■ Web-sites in English for Japanese castles are fairly numerous but rarely of value for serious castle studies. [Jcastles](#) seems the best I've come across but do let me know if you know of better sites or resources.

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